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*TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MARCH 16, 2009*

I appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 6345, An Act Protecting the Natural Resources of the Highlands Region.

This legislation prohibits the Department of Environmental Protection from issuing a permit to divert more than 50,000 gallons of water per day for a non-municipal recreational use when the source of such water is in a federally designated highlands region.

Water is an especially important resource in highlands regions because water is difficult to replenish in such elevated areas. The state has long been strongly concerned about water diversion -- for any water diversion of more than 50,000 gallons per day from the Department of Environmental Protection -- because of the significant potential impact on the environment. The Department of Environmental Protection has developed a permit review process to balance the need for diversion with the impact on water resources -- including water flow, water quality, and wetlands.

The General Assembly has specifically found that water diversion should only be allowed when "such diversion is found to be necessary, is compatible with long-range water resource planning, proper management and use of the water resources of Connecticut ..." Conn. Gen. Stat. section 22a-366.

House Bill 6345 refines this determination by expressly prohibiting water diversion of more than 50,000 gallons per day when the source of the water is in a recognized highlands region and when the use for such diversion is a non-municipal recreational use. By enacting such legislation, the General Assembly would determine and mandate that such recreational use can never justify significant water diversion affecting the highlands region because of the unique environmental impacts.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of House Bill 6345.